

# **Co-Creation for Sustainability**

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# **Co-Creation for Sustainability: The UN SDGs and the Power of Local Partnership**

BY

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# Preface

We have written this book out of a sense of urgency and hope. The threat to the sustainability of our natural and socioeconomic environment is now dire. Yet we also find a sense of hope in the fact that 193 United Nations member states came together in 2015 to support the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), establishing a strong agenda for tackling our most difficult global challenges. We have a long way to go to achieve the SDGs and we are now almost halfway to the Agenda 2030 finish line. Rather than becoming disillusioned, however, the gap between current results and the ultimate goals should motivate us to rethink and adjust our strategies and methods. Finding great merit in the partnership and collaboration values inscribed in Goal 17, this book advances cocreation as a strategy for accelerating our efforts to meet the goals. Cocreation can help to harness the power of local partnerships for achieving the ambitious 2030 Agenda.

The world is a much different place today than when we initially imagined this project. The COVID-19 pandemic has raced through the world and caused hardship and turmoil for millions of people. The pandemic has been detrimental to the implementation of the SDGs, derailing ambitious projects all over the world. Yet there are also hopeful reports that COVID-19 has brought people together in new ways and accentuated their understanding that the world confronts common challenges that call for united action. As the pandemic hopefully wanes, the agenda set out in this book becomes even more timely and relevant.

This book itself results from a sustained effort at cocreation that has spanned the world and bridged between academics and practitioners. Throughout this project, we consulted three experts – Pedro Conceição, Priya Gajraj, and Jens Wandel – affiliated with the United Nations. They have been a source of inspiration and ideas about how to implement a cocreation agenda. Pedro, Priya, and Jens have all provided comments that have guided the planning of book and greatly improved the content of individual chapters. We are grateful for their generous inputs, but note that the three authors take sole responsibility for the ideas and arguments put forth in this book.

This book is written with a specific audience in mind: changemakers around the world who take upon themselves the mission of mobilizing citizens and stakeholders to cocreate innovative SDG solutions. The book is intended to be read and utilized as a guidebook stimulating critical reflections on how to design and use cocreation as a lever for addressing the challenges of global sustainability. We hope that the book can be useful for individual changemakers, as well as for

the purpose of training potential cocreators in the noble art of doing together what individuals cannot do alone.

We extend our thanks to our editor David Mulvaney at Emerald for his support and understanding during the writing of this book. Thanks also to Head of Department Peter Kragelund, Department of Social Sciences and Business, Roskilde University for comments to several chapters and support for the Golden Open Access publishing that makes the digital version of the book freely available to everyone everywhere. We also thank the Peder Sather program at the University of California, Berkeley, for project support.

On a final note, we are pleased that a large research grant from the Independent Research Fund Denmark will allow us to continue the work that we have initiated in this book and contribute to the growing research on how collaborative governance can support the realization of the SDGs. We are looking forward to collaborating with people all over the world to further explore the factors that may support the cocreation of the green transition.

Chris, Eva, and Jacob  
Berkeley, USA, and Roskilde, Denmark  
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